



THE WHIRLIGIG

BY **HAMISH
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DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

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For My Daughters and Dad

THE WHIRLIGIG was originally produced in New York City by the New Group (Scott Elliott, Artistic Director; Adam Bernstein, Executive Director) at the Pershing Square Signature Center in May 2017. It was directed by Scott Elliott, the scenic design was by Derek McLane, the costume design was by Clint Ramos, the lighting design was by Jeff Croiter, the sound design was by M.L. Dagg, the original music was by Duncan Sheik, the special effects design was by Jeremy Chernick, the fight direction was by UnkleDave's Fight House, and the production stage manager was Valerie A. Peterson. The cast was as follows:

JULIE	Grace Van Patten
MICHAEL	Norbert Leo Butz
KRISTINA	Dolly Wells
PATRICK	Noah Bean
DERRICK	Jonny Orsini
TRISH	Zosia Mamet
GREG	Alex Hurt
MR. CORMENY	Jon DeVries

THE WHIRLIGIG was developed with the support of New York Stage and Film.

CHARACTERS

JULIE, 23, dying, full of life.

MICHAEL, 52, Julie's dad, teaches theater at Simon's Rock Junior College. Big drunk heart, in recovery.

KRISTINA, 50, Julie's mom, teaches Contemporary European History at Hartford University. Strong, level, struggled with depression in the past.

PATRICK, 30s, doctor, a normal guy.

DERRICK, early 30s, Pat's younger brother, a roller coaster, very sweet-hearted.

TRISH, 23, Julie's best friend in high school, mother of two, funny, unsentimental.

GREG, 30, Trish's husband, a bartender, in AA, Al-Anon, a mensch.

MR. CORMENY, 70s, a b-level social studies teacher at Monument Mountain Regional High, a bloviator, a drunk.

—The play takes place in the Berkshires, Western Massachusetts; the play's characters are off-season people who live there year-round.

—The play goes back and forth in time over a fifteen-year period.

—Ideally the action of the play should flow and overlap without pause between scenes, so memory and the present can coexist, as they do in life.

— / means the next line of dialogue begins at that point, overlapping.

THE WHIRLIGIG

ACT ONE

Scene 1

September, present, a hospital room. Julie, very thin and sick, lies in bed hooked up to machines and bags of medicine. Her eyes are closed. When she speaks her voice is very weak and can barely be heard in the room. There's an open hospital curtain round the bed. Kristina sits in one chair, far from the bed; it's hard to hear Julie from across the room. Michael sits next to the bed, chewing on hospital food.

MICHAEL. *(Slowly, chewing, trying to work it out.)* I really only have one question. This is. I mean this. Huh. Uh-huh. There's a texture to this. I've never experienced something like this. In my mouth. Huh. Just. So challenging. To the palette. Such a. I don't want to make a meal out of this, but.

JULIE. *(Eyes closed, smiling.)* What's your question?

MICHAEL. Who is the chef around here? I would like to meet that man.

Pause.

KRISTINA. Where is he.

MICHAEL. The chef?

KRISTINA. The doctor.

MICHAEL. Oh. I don't know.

JULIE. Maybe he's in the kitchen.

MICHAEL. The chef?

JULIE. The doctor.

MICHAEL. You think he got hungry?

JULIE. Maybe.

MICHAEL. He should be careful. This stuff'll...

Kristina goes to the door, looks down the hall for the doctor.

JULIE. Tell Mom to sit down.

KRISTINA. *(Not hearing.)* What did she say?

MICHAEL. She said you should sit.

JULIE. Tell her there's no rush.

KRISTINA. What?

MICHAEL. She said what's the rush?

JULIE. We know what he's going to say.

KRISTINA. What?

Slight pause.

MICHAEL. You want a bite of this?

KRISTINA. Do I want?

MICHAEL. She's worried you haven't eaten. When was the last time you ate?

KRISTINA. I'm fine. I have a bar in my bag.

MICHAEL. You're sure? The chef had this steak flown in straight from Salisbury. Connecticut, Salisbury; that's a pretty short flight to Pittsfield. Which may account for its freshness.

JULIE. *(A little louder.)* He's trying to fatten you up.

MICHAEL. I'm not, I'm not.

JULIE. I like your jokes Dad.

MICHAEL. They're terrible.

JULIE. I like bad jokes.

Kristina sits.

MICHAEL. Seriously, Kristina, I can go down to the cafeteria, or there's vending machines.

KRISTINA. What if he comes while you're gone.

MICHAEL. Well, you'd be here. I'd be quick.

KRISTINA. I said I have a bar. I'll be fine.

Pause.

JULIE. Does the door have a lock on it?

MICHAEL. Um, I'm not sure, I'll check.

KRISTINA. What are you doing?

MICHAEL. She wanted to know if the door has a lock on it.

KRISTINA. They don't, you can't lock the door.

MICHAEL. (*Checking the door.*) I think she's right.

KRISTINA. They have to, they have to have access. You can't lock the door.

JULIE. Shoot.

Michael goes back to his seat. Long pause.

KRISTINA. Steaks on a Plane.

Pause.

Wasn't there, isn't there, a movie—?

MICHAEL. There is, that was a very. That was a very bad joke, Kristina. Good work.

KRISTINA. Should it have been Salisbury Steaks on a Plane?

MICHAEL. Either way works.

Pause.

JULIE. Book.

MICHAEL. Why does Mom get to do all the reading? I want to read.

JULIE. You cry.

MICHAEL. I cry, I know, I can't read and not cry.

JULIE. It's gross.

KRISTINA. (*Searching her bag.*) I forgot.

MICHAEL. It's OK.

KRISTINA. I just thought it wouldn't be, no, I forgot, I just forgot, I have one job, one job, and I forgot, that doesn't make sense.

MICHAEL. It's OK, we don't need books, I can tell humorous anecdotes—

KRISTINA. But you know me Michael, that just doesn't make sense, that I'd forget.

JULIE. Is Mom trying to cry?

MICHAEL. She says she forgives you.

KRISTINA. I heard what she said.

Pause.

JULIE. (*To Michael.*) I want you to tell Mom what it's gonna be like when I die.

KRISTINA. (*Not hearing.*) What, is she picking on me again?

MICHAEL. She isn't saying anything.

JULIE. Tell her.

MICHAEL. I'm not gonna do that, I don't know what you're talking about.

JULIE. Mom.

KRISTINA. What is it?

Kristina comes to the bedside, Michael goes across the room.

JULIE. Pull the curtain. Stay on that side.

Kristina pulls the curtain round, concealing Julie.

Can you see me?

KRISTINA. No.

JULIE. Can you hear me?

KRISTINA. Yes.

JULIE. No. OK, no. Can you hear me starting now:

Silence.

Could you hear me?

KRISTINA. No.

JULIE. Can you see me?

KRISTINA. No.

JULIE. But I'm still here, right?

KRISTINA. Yes.

JULIE. That's what it's gonna be like when I'm dead, Mom, OK?

Pause.

Mwaaaahahahahahaha.

Kristina pulls back the curtain.

Do you think it's your fault, Mom?

KRISTINA. What do you want me to say?

The doctor knocks on the door and enters.

JULIE. Oh look, it's the chef. Maybe he knows who poisoned me.

Scene 2

A living room. Derrick watches TV, talks on an old iPhone 1. There is an empty pizza box, four empty beer cans, he holds the fifth.

DERRICK. (*A rant, rapid.*) No, no, NO. OK, you wanna play that game? You wanna play the *Blame Game*? Forget Sosa/McGwire—forget Barry Balco Bonds—*Blame the Bambino!* Blame Babe-blubber butt-Ruth for making us—for making us—will you let me finish? For making us fall in love with the Home Run and for ruining the integrity of a game that was never conceived of by Abner Doubleday—will you let me finish?—to be an exhibition of *power*—but *Rather*—yes I just said *rather*—an exhibition of *Beauty*—yes I just said *beauty*—AND THIS is WHY, oh by the way, yes, this is WHY!!! the man standing at the plate right now? he's gonna save us, because, In *Spite* of his Power, but *Because* of his Beauty—only four, this is my fifth—because he is a good, no, a great man—while the rest of them lied, and smirked, and had sex with Kate Hudson, and let that testosterone corrode their souls—oh, AND ADDITIONALLY—(and this should be incidental but it is a perfect example so I will cite it), *because he picked up that MICROPHONE* and walked out on the mound at Fenway, after those marathon terrorists had tried their worst, tried to tear us apart, and he said, and I quote,—*yes my voice is breaking a little, because I am a fucking human being, Curtis*,—and I quote: “This...is our fucking city.” ...I KNOW I HAVE NEVER LEFT BERKSHIRE COUNTY—and so, *not because* of his numbers, but BECAUSE of his spirit, his soul, which is a beautiful one: David Ortiz, Big Papi, will be the first player inducted into Baseball's Hall of Fame—*let me finish*—*IN SPITE of the fact that he was a drug addict*, whatever, used steroids, H.G.H.—and on cue he strikes out. No, you're right. There's no point caring anymore.

THE WHIRLIGIG

by Hamish Linklater

5 men, 3 women

Just south of Williamstown, if you take a left at the Red Lion Inn, there's an off-season part of Berkshire County where no one locks their doors, just in case someone comes home who's forgotten their key. In this quiet corner of Western Massachusetts, a motley cast of strangers from a dying young woman's past find one another on a night when they need each other most. *THE WHIRLIGIG* is a sparkle-dark, rollicking, rural romance about Death, Time, Mistaken Identity, Chance, Sex, Chancy Sex, and mostly, mostly Love.

"[Linklater] has whipped up a multicourse meal for fellow actors to feast upon. ...brimming with showy but spontaneous reversals of feeling along with dialogue that dances off the tongue."
—**The New York Times**

"...expressionistic in form and melancholy in tone...a touching play..." —**Variety**

"...THE WHIRLIGIG is such a pleasing play because it has the nerve to be only itself. It scorns easy laughs and easy tears and it even takes even takes an unfashionable position on the concept of regret. (Unlike Edith Piaf, this play is all for it.) ...THE WHIRLIGIG achieves a tragic theatrical force..."
—**The Village Voice**

"...[a] mixture of tragedy and comedy is central to Hamish Linklater's affecting and intelligent play, which references the bittersweet late works of Shakespeare and also borrows some of their tone... Even in its exuberant penultimate scene, crowded with characters and revelations, Linklater doesn't overexplain. He gives his stricken creations room to understand themselves, if not redeem themselves..."
—**Time Out New York**

"Linklater has a keen dramatic sense...plus a knack for sparkling dialogue. ...[THE WHIRLIGIG] is heartening and life-affirming."
—**The Huffington Post**

Also by Hamish Linklater
THE CHEATS
THE VANDAL

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